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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a relevant literary review and then develops a behavior-management program within schools encompassing social-skills training for all children. Both the literary review and this program can be used to educate administrators, educators, parents, and students about behaviors and warning signs associated with violent children. The paper also explores the factors contributing to violent behavior in children, particularly in relation to effective behavior-management programs. The training incorporates 16 basic social skills. Following instructions, accepting "no" for an answer, greeting others, and introducing yourself are a few of the skills to be taught. Another factor is developing goals. Students, along with parents, teachers, and administrators, develop goals that they want to attain by being involved in the program. Appendixes contain guidelines for CROSSINGS (Creating Real Opportunities for Student Success: Navigating Gainsville Schools). CROSSINGS is a behavior-management program that provides "Boys Town" social-skills training to at-risk students who are struggling with success in school or in personal areas. The program first identifies the needs of each student, then develops strategies for student success. It supports the student during the process of change, while providing mentors to support the student during and after change. Parents are involved in achieving success, while retraining and followup are provided after the completion of the program. (Contains 59 references.) Appended are materials from "Crossings, Bridging the Gap to Success." (DFR)

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VIOLENT CHILDREN IN TODAY'S SCHOOLS:

A LITERARY REVIEW AND A BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR ADMINISTRATORS

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INTRODUCTION

Violence is a major issue facing today's society (Javier, Herron, & Primavera, 1996). Administrators, teachers, parents, and community members must deal with disaster after disaster that results in increasing amounts of violence committed by children against children (Stone, 1999). Evidence of youth violence has been seen in school shootings across the entire country.

The Cable News Network (CNN, 2000) website has detailed the events of school shootings from May, 1992, up to the recent and tragic shooting in Littleton, Colorado. On May 1, 1992, a 20 year-old student opened fire at his former high school for retribution for a failing grade. The student killed 4 and wounded 10. On February 2,1996, in Moses Lake, Washington, a 14 year-old student turned a gun on his algebra class, killing 2 students and his teacher. Barry Loukaitis was convicted on two counts of aggravated first degree murder and sentenced to two life terms without parole (Pressley, 1999). On October 1, 1997, in Pearl Mississippi, a 16 year-old outcast killed his mother by slashing her throat (CNN, 1997), then went to school and killed 2 students and wounded 9. Luke Woodham entered his school early that Wednesday morning, pulled a rifle from his jacket and began shooting.

Woodham was described as being very reserved (CNN, 1997). Woodham was arrested and charged with three counts of murder. He was convicted and is serving three life sentences (Pressley, 1997).

On December 1,1997, in Padukah, Kentucky, a 14 year-old opened fire on a student prayer circle, killing 2 and wounding 5. Michael Carnael calmly inserted ear plugs, drew a .22 caliber handgun and opened fire on the morning prayer circle. Senior Ben Strong, a friend of Carnael, later reported that Carnael warned him to stay away from Monday's prayer session. Strong was able to talk Carnael into putting his gun down before reloading. Carnael was found with the .22 caliber handgun, two antique shotguns and two rifles along with a supply of shells (Baker, 1997).

The killings continued on March 24,1998. Two boys, ages 11 and 13, opened fire on students and staff members as they exited their school after the fire alarm sounded at Westside Middle School. As they rushed from the building, the boys in a nearby wooded area began shooting, killing 4 students, 1 teacher, and wounding 11 others (Schwartz, 1998). On May 21,1998, as a freshman opened fire in the school cafeteria, killing 2 and wounding 22. Further investigation found that the young man had killed his parents in their home before committing the school shooting. Kinkel had been expelled the day before for bringing a gun to school. The day of the shooting, Kinkel walked inside the school carrying a .22 caliber rifle, a .22-caliber handgun, and a Glock semiautomatic pistol. He opened fire with the rifle and when he ran out of ammunition, he was gang-

tackled by students before he was able to use a second weapon. After the school shooting, officers went to the Kinkel home, only to find two people dead, who were later identified as William and Faith Kinkel, Kip's parents (Claiborne, 1998). On April 20,1999, in Littleton, Colorado, the deadliest shooting occurred. Two young men entered Columbine High School and opened fire on the student body. The young men had also set off bombs making the situation more violent. The boys then turned their guns on themselves ending the siege. The death toll was 14, including one teacher and the two killers.

School shootings are becoming more numerous and the ages of the offenders makes the tragedies unthinkable and unexplainable (Agron, 1999; Gelles, 1998). Understanding all the reasons behind such violent actions by children permits us to invest in solutions for future tragedies. Violence prevention must focus on changing attitudes and behaviors that improve the social environments or change physical environments that lead to violent actions of today's children and youth (Hammond, 1998). Factors contributing to violence can be addressed in the home, school, and community through early intervention. These factors may be addressed by using methods such as seeking professional help (Jutz, 2000), training people to recognize warning signs, identifying those at risk for violence, and obtaining curriculum to address identified needs of violent students (Sylwester, 1999; Wise, 1999) and limiting the availability of alcohol, drugs, weapons and violence involving the media (Lowry, Cohen, & Modzeleski, 1999).

Today's society has been forced to face the problem of increasing violent acts committed by children against themselves and other children (Stone, 1999). The numbers of children displaying aggressive behavior is increasing, plus educators report that they do not have the skills to work with these students (Myles & Simpson, 1994). An estimated 3 million serious crimes occur annually within our schools. This averages out to be 16,000 violent incidences in our schools on a daily basis (Gable & VanAcker, 2000). Violent juvenile crime increased by 41% from 1982 to 1991. During the same time period, the number of arrests for murder and aggravated assault committed by juveniles increased by 93 % and 72 % respectively (Sprague & Walker, 2000). Dr. Ross Greene, who recently appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show, stated that there is an added problem of children having difficulty working through frustrations of daily life. Personnel in school systems must develop programs that are focused on helping students to gain control of their lives and help them to accept responsibility for their behaviors (Connelly, Dowd, Criste, Nelson, &Tobias, 1995; Korem, 1994).

There is evidence that children who exhibit violent behaviors are not lost, and they can learn to respond without using violent actions (Guetzloe & Rockwell, 1998). Administrators, teachers, parents, and community members need to recognize their role in building children's ability to maintain responsible behaviors essential to their success, both inside and outside classrooms.

The purpose of this paper was to present a relevant literary review and to develop a behavior management program within schools for all children encompassing social skills training. Both the literary review and this program can be used to educate administrators, educators, parents, and students about behaviors and warning signs associated with violent children. This paper also explored the factors contributing to violent behavior in children, particularly in relation to effective behavior management programs.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Today's children face many factors that may influence their decision as to whether or not they become violent. The parents of many children are not tuned in to the warning signs their children exhibit (Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998). The same children may also be exposed to verbal or physical abuse, either from parents or others. Brain disorders, such as oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) or bipolar disorder, may be warning signs for violent behavior in children (NOAH, 1996; Popalos & Popalos, 2000).

Violent behavior in children is also a growing concern of our society. National attention has been centered on a succession of school shootings such as those in Littleton, Colorado (Berson & Berson, 1999; Gable & VanAcker, 2000; Guetzloe, 1999; McCarthy & Webb, 2000). The issue is complex and difficult to understand. We are seeing children

as young as preschool age exhibiting violent behaviors (Jackson, 1997). Thousands of children come from backgrounds where they are exposed to factors that place them at-risk and eventually prove to be damaging (Walker & Sprague, 1999). The solution that many parents and educators subscribe to is that the children eventually outgrow these behaviors (Jutz, 2000). Parents ignoring any inappropriate behaviors will only cause them to intensify (Greene, 2000 ; Hargreaves, 2001).

Violent behaviors exhibited should never be dismissed or considered as a phase in their development; they must be addressed (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry [AACAP], 1996; Berson & Berson, 1999).

Role Parents Play in Child Development

Parents play a vital role in the welfare and development of their children (Pollack, 2000; Sylwester, 1999). They may be responsible for factors contributing to the increased risk of violent behaviors in their children. Such factors include exposing children to violence in the home and in their community, socio-economic factors like poverty, lack of employment, divorce, single parenting, and lack of support from extended family members (Guetzloe, 1999). All these factors may play a role in placing a child at higher risk for violence (AACAP, 1996; Band & Harpold, 1999; Sprague & Walker, 2000). Dr. Lawrence A. Stone of the AACAP (1999) states children fear various forms of violence:

violence against material objects such as vandalism and arson; violence against people such as assault and battery; group violence such as gangs; and family violence such as child abuse and spousal abuse. Family violence may mark the child forever, leading to a life of violent behavior (Schaeffer, 1999).

Children who have experienced family violence have a disruption in the bonding process and attachments are from a negative background. This background causes victims of violence to continue the violence themselves. The removal of this bond between parents, who are responsible for their children's welfare, is common in children who kill (Gelles, 1998). The combination of having a person experience violence and then model the violence makes it difficult to trace the causes of the violent behavior (Guetzloe & Rockwell, 1998). When predicting the causes of violent behavior, the treatment by the parents of their children become a vital predictor (Stephens, 1998).

Marin (1999) conducted an interview with Gitta Sereny for the 60 Minutes II news show. Sereny spent five decades researching the world's worst villains. Those interviewed were from the highest ranks of the Third Reich to children who have committed violent crimes. She is most famous for interviewing Mary Bell at 40. Bell at the age of 11 was responsible for the deaths of two children, ages 3 and 4. Sereny had strong opinions about children who had committed violent crimes stating, "It is not the guns that cause this. I am convinced relationships or the lack of them between children and parents [do]."[1]

Parent-Child Relations and Gang Activity

When researching violent actions by children, all these children had been rejected, whether by their mothers or by their fathers. She also found that children are not motivated to kill by evil inside them, but do commit terrible acts. They are breaking out, looking to be rescued from their situations (Korem, 1994; Sereny, 1998). He or she is responding not to evil inside, but to hurt or pain. The feelings are a cry for help (Pollack, 2000).

Many times youth associate themselves with gangs, hoping to fulfill their needs. Korem (1994) states three ways children use gangs to provide relief from their pain. First, they try to mask their pain; second, they attempt to distract themselves from their pain by participating in gang activity; and third, they use gangs as an empowering device over their pain. These children feel isolated and rejected by their family when they break apart. The gang offers permanence and stability at a time when a youth is experiencing a time of great anxiety.

In order to prevent our youth from joining gangs we must release them from their pain (Korem, 1994).

> Children who join gangs and many who commit violent acts have several factors in common: divorce or separation of parents, sexual abuse, physical abuse, severe family dysfunction, and both parents work, but it is not necessary for both to do

> so. These risk factors are more common than we would care to think. Out of 64 million kids, 40 million youth have backgrounds with these risk factors present.[2]

Abusive parents, relatives, friends, or others leave physical and psychological marks that cannot help but scar young children (AACAP, 1998a). Cottle (1998) reported some startling statistics concerning child abuse in the United States. He found that 1 out of every 4 girls and 1 in every 7 boys have experienced some form of child abuse, and that 1,850 children are abused daily in America.

Cottle (1998) also discussed that many children are abused for no reason at all, and therefore, children are not able to understand the link between cause and effect. As an outsider looking in, it may not be apparent to us that abuse is taking place, also making it difficult for us to make the link between cause and effect, when we see children committing violent acts (Sereny, 1998). We simply cannot see the scars from the outside looking in (Pollack, 2000). Kidd-Burton (1996) hypothesized that children exposed to extreme violence are significantly at-risk for developing discipline problems in school. A study was conducted to determine if a relationship existed between specific violent events experienced by children and the number of discipline problems exhibited by the same children. In the study, 147 general education high school students between the ages of 14 and 18 in an urban community were surveyed. Two research questions were addressed. One dealt with the violence experienced by the student and the discipline problems exhibited by the student. The second question dealt with a student's attitude toward

school violence and the number of discipline problems exhibited at school. A canonical and multiple regression analysis and analysis of variance were performed to determine relations between specific types of violent events experienced by children and the behavior management problems they exhibited. The statistical tests were significant ($p<.05$). The results demonstrated that children who told about violent acts, witnessed violent acts or committed them were more likely to exhibit behavior management problems at school. The relationship between violent events experienced by children and the behavior they exhibit was evident.

Children are often guilty of defining themselves based on the role models in their lives. Many children, due to abuse, will define themselves as victims or avengers (Jackson, 1997). Research data indicates that children who are abused and who may be taking on the role of victims or avengers are more likely to develop aggressive behavior (Band & Harpold, 1999; Cottle, 1998). All is not lost once abuse has occurred. A family can learn new ways to communicate without abusive behavior taking place. Children can then learn to regain their self-confidence and learn to trust others again (AACAP, 1998a).

Physical Ailments: Another Cause of Violent Behavior

Abuse, whether physical or mental, is not the only cause of violent behavior in children. Beverly Jackson (1997) reported exposure to violence could result in a child suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. This disorder is usually associated with war

veterans, but has recently been diagnosed in others who have witnessed or endured violence. The symptoms, like so many other disorders include irritability, withdrawal or passivity, and possible hyperaggression.

One of the problems associated with diagnosing related brain disorders is that the symptoms may be confused with a totally different diagnosis. Dr. Demitri Popolos and wife, Dr. Janice Popalos (2000), in a discussion of bipolar disorder on the Oprah Winfrey show, stated that bipolar can be easily confused with attention deficit disorder (ADD), ODD, and even manic depression. Brain damage due to a head injury may cause similar behaviors to those previously mentioned (AACAP, 1996).

Popalos and Popalos (2000) also asserted that with the symptoms of these disorders being similar, it is also easy to misdiagnose and prescribe medication that might cause adverse reactions. One example would be to diagnose bipolar disorder as ADD and prescribe Ritalin. The medication in persons with bipolar may cause hallucinations and even psychosis in a patient suffering from ODD.

Whether or not any warning signs are evident, people in different communities and schools need to know how to recognize the signs. Questions about warning signs are often asked as soon as a violent action is reported (Dwyer et al., 1998). The warning signs on an individual basis may not be sufficient for predicting violent behavior. Parents, educators, and friends may recognize some warning signs individually, but unless they are viewed in their entirety, they may be dismissed. Specific behaviors may

be viewed as indicators of violent behavior and may be important characteristics of a violent child (Dwyer et al., 1998).

Social withdrawal, feelings of rejection, and perception of isolation from friends and family (Stephens, 1998; & Guetzloe, 1999) are all indicators of a child who is at-risk for exhibiting violent behavior (Pollack, 1998). Children who experience these feelings show a defiance in the relationships between themselves and other people in society, who they believe are suppose to protect them (Gelles, 1998; Korem, 1994). These children may lash out or threaten the people around them (Myles & Simpson, 1994; Pollack, 1998). This form of lashing out is a form of self-preservation or a coping mechanism (Jackson, 1997). Jackson found that coping mechanisms help children define relationships with others.

Reasons for Withdrawal From Relationships

Children who withdraw from relationships around them may also be the result of bullies (Dwyer et al., 1998; Guetzloe, 1999; Pollack, 1998). Bullies can be found in the form of parents, peers, and siblings (Stephens, 1998), and is considered to be the most common form of violence in our society (Weinhold, 2000). Stephens found that 80% of bullies were first victims themselves. Bullying occurs every 7 minutes and lasts for approximately 37 seconds. Sixty percent of kids who bully will have a criminal conviction by the age of 24 (MacDonald, 1998). Without intervention, 40% of childhood

bullies will become adult felons (Holden, 1997). Another problem that must be considered is that bullies are often the most popular in school (Prentice, 2000). Prentice states that this fact adds more stress to those bullied. Not only are they bullied, but many times they are also excluded from the popular crowd as well. Furthermore, psychologists worry that popular bullies may be less likely to change their behavior than unpopular bullies because it works so well for them. These bullies begin to believe that aggression, popularity and control go together; using physical aggression to get what they want from society has always been effective. Bullying continues in schools due to a fear of retaliation. Students are fearful that their confidentiality will be breached. Bullies in turn survive and are allowed to continue by creating a situation where the bullied individuals will be retaliated against severely and swiftly, if they tell (McLellan, 2000). A child that is bullied or constantly picked on may begin expressing his or her anger more frequently in response to minor situations (Dwyer et al., 1998). Dwyer et al. (1998) reported that if parents or other adults do not address the anger, the anger might escalate into more chronic and serious behaviors.

Chronic behavior problems may change a student's performance in school; an example would be the limitation of a child's capacity to learn (Dwyer et al., 1998). Stephens (1998) reported that there is a correlation between school failure and violent behavior. In most cases of violent behavior, school failure has been dominant.

Other Factors Related to School Failure

School failure is also associated with drug and alcohol abuse (AACAP, 1998b). Young people who use drugs and alcohol exercise poor judgement and a reduction in self-control, which exposes them to violence (Band & Harpold, 1999; Dwyer et al., 1998; Lowry, Cohen, & Modzeleski, 1999; Walker & Sprague, 1999). Alcohol and drug abuse lowers a child's inhibitions and reduces a person's threshold for violence (Stephens, 1998; Wood, Zalud, & Hoag, 1996). The AACAP (1998b) reported that children begin drug and alcohol use to fit in or to reduce stress. The average age of a child who began using marijuana was 14 and he or she usually began abusing alcohol around age 12.

The AACAP (1995) reported that children who abuse alcohol are more likely to have access to a gun and are at a higher risk for becoming violent (Dwyer et al., 1998). The children's accessibility to guns is a hot issue. A survey done by the Harvard School of Public Health indicated that 59% of students can get a gun if they want one, and 2-3% said they could obtain one within 24 hours (Stephens, 1998).

Stephens (1998) reported school violence where guns were involved was coupled with a perpetrator who was also involved with gangs. Children tended to imitate gang behavior, becoming a part of them by participating in the same violent behavior (Cartwright, 1998; Dwyer et al., 1998). Violent behavior associated with gangs was also portrayed by the media such as music, television, and the Internet as glamorous (AACAP,

1999). The AACAP (1995) reported that music was not a problem for the happy and healthy teenager, but those children who may not be happy, they might have trouble differentiating between fantasy and reality presented within the music. Children who were exposed to violence through media outlets were likely to use them as learning tools (Javier et al., 1996). Exposure to violence in the media has been identified to drive at-risk youth toward violent acts (Walker & Sprague, 1999). Although media was not the only factor contributing to violent behavior, it was a factor (AACAP, 1999).

Parental Involvement is Paramount for Solutions

The solution for some parents, educators, and others in combating violent behavior is to place their children on the back burner, hoping that they will cure themselves. It is easier to ignore the problem, rather than search for solutions and intervene (Cottle, 1998). Parental and adult love is the greatest deterrent to violent behavior in children. Parents are a stronger influence on their children than their peers (Pollack, 2000). Youth who are raised in a stable family where they are nurtured and allowed to develop characteristics such as warmth, responsibility, and moral character may not develop violent tendencies (Cottle, 1998). Pollack (2000) states that the best way to protect children is to be caring and listening parents who want their children to grow up healthy. The expectations for children must be made clear through consistent feedback and a sense of value and success must be instilled (Wise, 1999).

Research has demonstrated that students grow up healthy and successful when parents are involved. Elman (2000) hypothesized that parent involvement was tied to student success. He designed a study to examine the effects of school-home communication, parents' attitudes toward their child's school with regard to their involvement in the home and in the school or community. The participants consisted of 393 primary caregivers and 110 teachers from 4 urban public schools in Washington Heights, New York.

The parents and teachers anonymously completed modified surveys. A path analysis was performed to test school practices and the degree to which parents were involved. The survey indicated that children from high-risk communities would more likely have parental involvement in their lives at school when educators made an effort to initiate a collaborative relationship with the parents in the education of the children.

Involving parents can be a way to eliminate or lessen the problem behaviors exhibited by children (Dwyer et al., 1998). Educators should invest time by developing preventative measures to avoid violent behavior (Myles & Simpson, 1994). While in the process of educating students, teachers can develop positive attitudes towards students, allowing them to create a trusting relationship. When a relationship is built between adults and students, the adult is likely to identify warning signs exhibited by the child and may be able to aid that student in managing his or her behavior (Myles & Simpson,1994). Changes in behavior may warrant a parent consulting a physician to rule out any physical

explanations (AACAP, 1995). If the behavior persists, it may be necessary to consult a psychiatrist to rule out causes such as ODD or bipolar disorder.

Social Skills Training Programs: Alternative Solutions

Once the physical and mental explanations are ruled out, a social skills training program may be an alternative solution. Social skills programs aid students in developing problem-solving skills and serve to lower aggressive behavior in children (Hammond, 1998; Sylwester, 1999; Wise, 1999). The Boys Town Education Model (BTEM) is one of few programs that incorporate social skills training into the school system across the entire curriculum (Dowd et al., 1993). The basis for BTEM is that behavior is learned through feedback on the behavior. The model focus is on deficient social skills that are not yet developed in children (Connelly et al., 1995).

Connelly et al. (1995) and Dowd et al. (1993) detail the four components of the BTEM model. The social skills curriculum encompasses of a set of 16 social behaviors involving relations with adults and peers. Teaching interactions guide educators in how to teach using specialized approaches. Inappropriate behavior exhibited by students is seen as a learning and teaching opportunity. The motivating system focuses on giving praise to students who exhibit desired behaviors. Students who are behavior problems lack motivation to alter their behavior and must be given help in the early stages of change.

One last aspect of the BTEM model is administrative intervention. Students attempting to regain control need established consistency when it comes to discipline, and they also need individual assessment in response to rule violations. The goal of the BTEM model is to have children achieve success and return to the classroom.

Doughty (1997) conducted a research study to determine if a curriculum based on building social skills, such as Boys Town Education Model (BTEM), would improve student performance of severely, emotionally, or behaviorally-disordered students (SEBD). Student performance was determined in terms of success in reading recognition and comprehension, mathematics, and spelling. Student behavior was charted on the basis of suspensions, restraints and timeouts. Twenty-one students, ages 11 to 19, were chosen to participate. The students were classified as SEBD. The researcher found that the BTEM was effective in improving academic scores and decreasing disruptive behavior.

McNeese (1999) performed a study evaluating the impact of the BTEM school model on reducing violent behavior within a large suburban middle school setting after 1 year of implementation. The discipline data was analyzed using chi-square analysis to compare the control school to the BTEM school. The study supported that BTEM school model had a significant effect in lowering the total number of time-outs and reduced violent student behaviors. Total school suspensions decreased 7%, regular education student suspensions decreased 16%, aggression and disrespect toward adults lowered 4%, and non-compliant student behaviors decreased by 9 % after 1 year. This Boys Town

Education Model was proven to have a positive effect on lowering disruptive behavior. Providing structured classroom management allowed teachers and administrators the ability to focus on academics.

Children and teens today are faced with hurdles to overcome on a daily basis. For many children, unfortunately, one of the hurdles may be their own parents. For others, it may the influence of gangs, alcohol, or other drugs. For many of these children and teens, they do not have the skills necessary to overcome the hurdles they face. It is imperative that things change. For those children who do not have anyone to lean on for support, administrators and teachers can provide mentors that may be able to fill that role. For children who consistently misbehave, administrators, teachers, and mentors can provide them with skills that will help them to deal properly with most situations.

It is unfortunate that school personnel must provide tremendous support to their students. It should, of course, come from the home. Many times this support does not happen because the parents are unprepared for parenthood. The parents do not possess social skills, much less have the ability to teach them to someone else. Children and teens are crying out. They want relationships with adults. They want to be taught. They want to know they are loved. Once a child or teen knows that he or she is cared for, the trust can build, relationships can develop, and behavior can improve.

PROCEDURES

Increasing levels of violence in schools and news reports of weapons associated with that violence have become almost commonplace (Rettig, 1999). Many people view the violence in schools as a cry for help (Korem, 1994; Rettig, 1999; Sereny, 1998). Youngsters simply need to be taught how to relate to other people. The importance of young people being taught and being help responsible for their behavior is paramount (Rettig, 1999).

Rettig (1999) emphasizes that the process begins by school personnel modeling the desired behaviors. The school personnel must be deliberate in cultivating the same qualities and behaviors in their students. Parents, teachers, administrators, and other adults in the school must have input and be involved in the social skills education of their students (Walker & Eaton-Walker, 2000). These adults have the greatest influence on the social development of the student.

Early intervention in the lives of troubled youth by adults who care is critical in preventing violence (Korem, 1994; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). When many of the school shootings and those who perpetrated the violence were investigated, in all cases the shooter(s) left warning signs (Skiba & Peterson, 1999), which are cries for help (Sereny, 1994; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Another purpose of this paper was to develop a behavior management program within schools for all children encompassing social skills training. This program will be used to educate administrators, educators, parents, and students about behaviors and warning signs associated with violent children. This paper also explored the factors contributing to violent behavior in children, particularly in relation to effective behavior management programs. A program that addresses the issue of violence is desperately needed in today's schools. Parents, teachers, and administrators are looking for solutions for the ever-increasing issue of violent youth. The issue of violent behavior is not a problem facing only junior high and high schools. As previously discussed, children as young as preschool age are expressing violent behaviors (Jackson, 1997).

The program in this paper included social skills training. This training incorporated 16 basic social skills. Following instructions, accepting no for an answer, greeting others, and introducing yourself were a few of the skills to be taught. Another factor was goal-developing. Each student along with parents, teachers and administrators developed goals that they wanted to attain by being involved in the program.

Another aspect of the behavior management program was to pair each student from Chalmers Elementary, Lee Intermediate School, Gainesville Junior High, and Gainesville High School in Gainesville, Texas with a mentor. The responsibility of

the mentor was to listen and be a safe person for the student to invest time with on a regular basis. The mentor established a relationship with the student and was someone on his or her campus, possibly a favorite teacher. The student must check in with the mentor daily. The students and mentors discussed the students' goals and issues that the students may be struggling with in school, at home, or in their personal life.

Hopefully, this behavior management program across grade levels will provide students in the Gainesville Independent School District with the skills they need to navigate everyday life. These skills will hopefully fill the missing gaps and allow the students to achieve success in spite of their circumstances. All children and teens can benefit, no matter where the gap exists, even if their relationship with their parents is strained or based on abuse, even if they are being bullied by others, and even if they are involved with illegal drugs or alcohol. Children and teens must be taught the skills they need to be successful, but more than that, children and teens must be able to see and understand that they are valued and worthy of our time and efforts (See Appendix).

CONCLUSIONS

The growing incidences of violence in our schools are problems faced by parents, teachers, administrators, and the students each day. These problems must be

addressed. Unfortunately, in many circumstances, the urgent issues are not truly discussed in many homes. Many factors may contribute to the lack of communication in the home regarding violent behavior. Abuse or neglect may be a part of the home environment, which compounds the issue; the child or teen may be involved in gang activity, physical ailments may be a factor, and drugs and alcohol could be influencing the decision-making processes of the child or teen.

Whatever the cause, the problems must be addressed. In order for everyone to be successful in the school setting, there must be appropriate behaviors exhibited by all, even if there are circumstances that may influence that behavior. For many children and teens, school can be a big challenge. Not only are they concerned with academics, but they may also be concerned about their family situation, peer relationships, everyday temptations, and the possibility that they may not be safe at school. Children and teens that have these concerns may struggle with certain kinds of social behavior, especially paying attention, following directions, peer acceptance or effectively communicating with their teachers. When children and teens deal with a great deal of problems, it is no wonder that they act out, especially when those social skills are not there for them to rely on to exhibit appropriate behaviors.

Parents, of course, should be the first teacher to teach the social skills necessary for a child to be successful. Many times, this is not the case. Many examples can be cited where parents dropped the ball. It then became imperative that social skills were

then taught to students so that they had every opportunity to change and obtain the skills that helped them to attain success. Like parents, teachers have had a great deal of influence on children. Many times teachers are the only role models in a child's life. Crossings is a program in Gainesville, Texas that uses teachers to help those students who struggle with making responsible decisions, due to their inefficient background in social skills training.

It is a sad reflection on today's society that the schools have to do more of the jobs of the parents. Our society is fast paced and many demands are placed on parents to succeed. These demands and the pursuit of success often come at the cost of a child or teen. Too many children and teens struggle in their ability to make good decisions because they have not been taught the skills necessary to do so. This struggle causes many children and teens to resort to violent behavior to gain the attention of any adult.

Some blame is directly related to the parents in our society. When we make the decision to become parents, we should be aware of our responsibility. Children look to us for love, safety, and direction. Many times we let them down because we work or have other things in our lives that have precedence over our own children. Selfishness is also responsible for our failing as parents. In many cases, it takes two jobs for a family to make ends meet, but many times it does not. David Korem, in a presentation at Denton Bible Church, stated that children do know the difference

between parents who have to work to survive and the parents who are career driven or just choose to work.[3] Children need to be the priority. It is the responsibility, for myself and other parents across the country, to teach our children those crucial skills they need to succeed in and away from home.

Our goals as parents are to raise a child or teen that is secure and loved at home and a child or teen that is secure and confident outside the home. Our goals as administrators are to help parents and children to achieve these same goals. We need to use the behavior management programs to develop skills in children and teens who need them, at the earliest age possible. Waiting until a crisis point occurs in schools to take action is too late. The school tragedies such as Columbine, Jonesboro, and Padukah should be enough to engage all those in contact with children to act proactively. By giving children and teens the skills they need to succeed, we can then work with them to achieve success, in spite of the external influences that often impede that success.

All of us need to be nonresistant to much needed changes, particularly when we can offer alternatives or options for success and well being. Florence Scovel Shinn reaffirmed that essence –"the Chinese say that water is the most powerful element because it is perfectly nonresistant. It can wear away a rock and sweep all before it." As educators, administrators, parents, and concerned citizens, we can become more

nonresistant to the options and ongoing changes that help all of our students embrace success as well as lifelong learnings.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] Gitta Sereny is a well-known author who is famous for interviewing people with violent backgrounds. Sereny was interviewed by C. Marin in October 1999 on the 60 Minutes II news show. Sereny spoke on her theories that children become violent, based upon the lack of relationships with their parents.

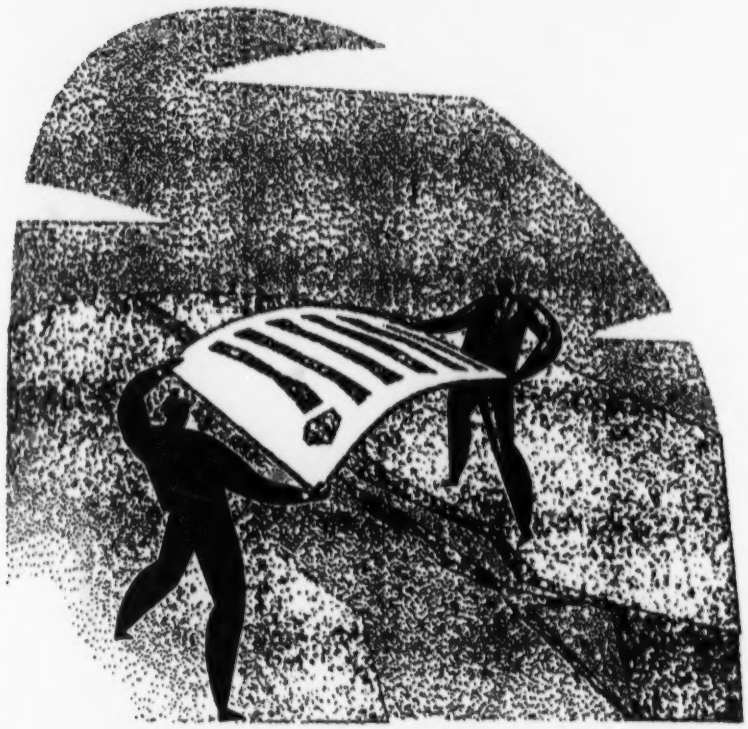
[2]Danny Korem is a well-known author who is famous in his profession of criminal profiling. Korem spoke at Denton Bible Church in Denton, Texas on July 26, 2000. The title of his presentation was, "Lies, Cons, and the Truth". Korem spoke on the problem of violent youth. Korem spoke at length about his interpretation on today's youth. He gave insight into why children and youth are acting out in violent fashion. He also gave some solutions for beginning to resolve the situation.

[3]Ibid

APPENDIX

CROSSINGS

Creating Real Opportunities
for Student Success:
Navigating Gainesville Schools



BRIDGING THE GAP TO SUCCESS

CROSSINGS GUIDELINES

Program Description A behavior management program that provides Boys Town social skills training to students who are struggling with success in school or in personal areas.

Who Qualifies? Those students who have been identified as "at-risk" for failure. Also any student who is referred by parents, teachers, or administrators.

Program Location Location is dependent upon age or grade of participant.

Staff Instruction is provided by a certified teacher and teaching assistant. An administrator may be selected to lead the program, if deemed necessary for success.
Counselors from each campus may be utilized for the program to provide services for students. Mentors will be provided at Lee Intermediate, Gainesville Junior High, and Gainesville High School. The mentors will be faculty members who volunteer time and will receive training to counsel children or teens. Students will be able to choose their mentor. Limitations will be placed on the number of students that one mentor will be able to serve, so that popular teachers will not become obligated beyond what they can successfully

manage. The number of mentors will be dependent upon the number of students referred to the program. In the beginning, 4-5 mentors will be chosen to receive training.

Goals

***Identify the needs of each student**
***Develop strategies for student success**
***Support the student during process of change**
***Provide mentor to support student during and after change**
***Parental involvement in achieving success**
***Provide retraining and follow-up after completion of program**

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Identify the Needs of Each Student

- **Survey of Home Life**

  Parents (married, divorced, separated, remarried, dating, etc.)

  Siblings (number, ages and grade levels)

  Grandparents (especially if filling role of parent)

  Foster home (temporary or permanent situation)

- **Office Referrals**

  Types of behaviors exhibited (disruptive or disrespectful behaviors)

  Number of Referrals (in a six-week period)

- **Classroom**

  Teacher observations (academic progress, behavior, social interaction)

  Classroom struggles (behavior, social or academic)

Develop Strategies for Student Success

- **Provide Boys Town training for entire staff.**

  *Have a person on each campus certified to provide the campus with training

  *Trained staff will provide reinforcement to students after attending program. The entire staff will mirror and give feedback on social skills.

  *As students move to new campus (promote to another grade level), trained staff will already be in place to provide reinforcement again for students.

  *Support the student during process of change.

- **Have counseling available for all students.**

  *Counselors trained in Boys Town techniques will meet with students on a regular basis.

*Mentors will also receive counseling training to meet the needs of all students.

- **Trained teachers will support and reinforce training received by students.**

  *All teachers will receive Boys Town training to reinforce the learning of their students.

  *Teachers will also strive to teach skills taught in the behavior management program to students in the classroom who have not been referred to the Crossings Program.

- **Younger students will have a safe haven in their homeroom.**

  *The teacher will provide a safe environment for students to achieve success. Make the classroom a place where the children want to be.

  *The teacher will utilize the role of the principal in discipline matters, so that the classroom will be a place where the children want to be.

- **Older students will have mentors that will also provide a safe environment. The mentor can be a confidant and also aid the student in making decisions.**

  *Mentors will provide a safe environment for all students.

  *Mentors will also provide confidentiality for all students.

Support the Student during Process of Change

- **Have counseling available for all students**
- **For older students, mentors will be provided. The student will check in daily with mentor to discuss student progress.**
- **Trained teachers will be provided to support and reinforce training received by students.**
- **Younger students have the safe haven of homeroom. Teacher provides a safe environment for student to achieve success. Make the classroom the place that the child wants to be.**

Provide Mentor to Support Student During and After Change

- A mentor will be provided for students in Lee Intermediate, Gainesville Junior High, and Gainesville High School.
- The student will choose the mentor.
- The student will check in daily with his or her mentor.
- The mentor will provide a safe and confidential environment for the student. The mentor will monitor the students' progress daily. The mentor will also be a confidant and develop a relationship of trust with the student. The mentor will reinforce those skills learned during the training. The mentor will be a source of support and encouragement for the student.
- The mentor relationship will continue until deemed unnecessary by the mentor and student collaboratively.

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Parental Involvement in Achieving Success

For Younger Children:

- **Ongoing conversations to inform the parents of student behavior and progress.**
- **Develop strategies with parent to help reinforce social skills training at home.**
- **Provide parent opportunities to be trained themselves to help them improve their parenting skills.**

For Older Teens:

- **Parents are required to attend a meeting after the first day of training. The meeting may be scheduled at night for parent convenience. Parents will receive an overview of the behavior management program and actually take part in some of the training. This will provide the parents with insights that may help them buy into the GISD program.**

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- **Inform the parents that this may be a placement that may prevent their child from entering the Alternative Education Program (AEP), and that the involvement of the parents is crucial in the success of the program.**

Provide Retraining and Follow-up

After Completion of Program

- Circumstances may warrant a student to repeat the program. The younger students may need several training attempts in order to incorporate the skills into their lives. Older students may repeat as well.
- Follow-up will include the behaviors taught, being reinforced by teachers who also have been trained in Boys Town strategies.
- Counseling will be made available for all students.
- Mentoring will continue until the mentor and student collaboratively feels it unnecessary to continue.
- Administrators will continue to monitor student success and relate those successes to the parents on a periodic basis.

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Thomas A. Edison Elementary Campus

Student	Grades Pre-K through First Grade
Reason for Referral	Students identified as "at-risk", behavior problems, truancy, abuse, neglect, emotional problems, and other factors.
Referred by	Parents, teachers counselors, and administrators
Program design	A ½ day program incorporating Boys Town social skills training. This ½ day program will include game-like activities that will provide social skills training in a fun and safe atmosphere.
Skills Taught	Following directions Accepting "No" for an answer Greeting others Getting the teacher's attention Making a request Making an apology
Location	Edison Campus

Chalmers Elementary School

Student	Grades 2nd through 4th grades.
Reason for Referral	Students identified as "at-risk", behavior problems, truancy, abuse, neglect, emotional problems, and other factors.
Referred by	Parents, teachers, counselors, or administrators.
Program	One-day program incorporating Boys Town social skills training and Mentor program. This one-day program will include game-like activities that will provide social skills training in a fun and safe atmosphere.
Skills Taught	Following directions Accepting criticism or consequences Accepting "No" as an answer Greeting others Getting the teacher's attention Making a request Making an apology
Location	Chalmers Elementary School

Lee Intermediate School

Students	Fifth and Sixth Grades
Reason for Referral	Students identified as "at-risk", behavior problems, truancy, abuse, neglect, emotional problems, and other factors.
Referred by	Parents, teachers, counselors, or administrators.
Program	One-two day program incorporating Boys Town social skills training and a mentor program. This one to two day program will include game-like activities that will provide social skills training in a fun and safe atmosphere.

Skills Taught	Following directions Accepting consequences Accepting "No" for an answer Greeting others Getting teacher's attention Making a request Disagreeing appropriately Resisting peer pressure Making an apology Talking with others Reporting other youth's behavior
Location	Lee Intermediate Campus

Gainesville Junior High

Student	Seventh and Eighth Grade
Reason for Referral	Students identified as "at-risk", behavior problems, truancy, abuse, neglect, emotional problems, criminal activity, and other factors.
Referred by	Parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, or judicial officials.
Program	Two to three day program incorporating Boys Town social skills training and mentor program. This program will include game-like activities that will provide social skills training in a fun and safe atmosphere.

Skills Taught during Two-day program	Following directions Accepting criticism or consequence Accepting "No" for an answer Greeting others Getting the teacher's attention Making a request Disagreeing appropriately Resisting peer pressure Making an apology Talking with others Reporting other youth's behavior
Three-day program	Previous skills plus the following: Giving criticism Giving compliments Accepting compliments Volunteering Introducing yourself
Location	Alternative campus site such as the old Lindsay Elementary campus. Open and renovate for Alternative Education Program (AEP) program as well as the Crossings Program.

Gainesville High School

Student	Ninth through Twelfth Grades
Reason for Referral	Students identified as "at-risk", behavior problems, truancy, abuse, neglect, emotional problems, criminal activity, and other factors.
Referred by	Parents, teachers, administrators, or judicial officials.
Program	Three-day program incorporating Boys Town social skills training and a mentor program. This three-day program will include game-like activities that will provide social skills training in a fun and safe atmosphere.

Skills taught	Following directions Accepting criticism or consequences Accepting "No" for an answer Greeting others Getting the teacher's attention Making a request Disagreeing appropriately Giving criticism/negative feedback Resisting peer pressure Making an apology Talking with others Giving compliments Accepting compliments Volunteering Reporting other youth's behavior Introducing yourself
Location	Alternative campus site such as old Lindsay Elementary campus. Open and renovate for Alternative Education Program as well as Crossings Program.

Boys Town Basic Skills

The Boys Town program incorporates 16 basic skills into their program that focuses on 4 main topics: adult relations, peer relations, school rules, and classroom behaviors. Each skill has concrete steps to follow. These steps are easily observed and easily measured. Students know what is expected and are able to achieve success.

Skill 1 **Following Directions**

1. Look at the person.
2. Say "Okay".
3. Do what you've been asked right away.
4. Check back.

Skill 2 **Accepting criticism or a consequence**

1. Look at the person.
2. Say "Okay".
3. Don't argue.

Skill 3 **Accepting "No" for an answer**

1. Look at the person.
2. Say "Okay".
3. Stay calm.
4. If you disagree, ask later.

Skill 4 **Greeting Others**

1. Look at the person.
2. Use a pleasant voice.
3. Say "Hi" or "Hello".

Skill 5 **Getting the teacher's attention**

1. Look at the teacher
2. Raise you hand. Stay calm.
3. Wait until the teacher says your name.
4. Ask your question.

Skill 6 **Making a request**

1. Look at the person.
2. Use a clear, pleasant voice.
3. Explain exactly what you are asking for. Say "please".
4. If the answer is "Yes," say "Thank you."
5. If not, remember to accept "No" for an answer.

Skill 7 **Disagreeing appropriately**

1. Look at the person.
2. Use a pleasant voice.
3. Say, "I understand how you feel."
4. Tell why you feel differently.
5. Give a reason.
6. Listen to the other person.

Skill 8 **Giving criticism**

1. Look at the person.
2. Stay calm. Use a pleasant voice.
3. Say something positive or "I understand."
4. Describe exactly what you are criticizing.
5. Tell why this is a problem.
6. Listen to the person. Be polite.

Skill 9 **Resisting peer pressure**

1. Look at the person.
2. Use a calm voice.
3. Say clearly that you do not want to participate.
4. Suggest something else to do.
5. If necessary, continue to say "No."
6. Leave the situation.

Skill 10 **Making an apology**

1. Look at the person.
2. Use a serious, sincere voice.
3. Say "I'm sorry for..." or " I want to apologize for..."
4. Don't make excuses.
5. Explain how you plan to do better in the future.
6. Say "Thanks for listening."

Skill 11 **Talking with others**

1. Look at the person.
2. Use a pleasant voice.
3. Ask questions.
4. Don't interrupt.

Skill 12 Giving compliments

1. Look at the person.
2. Smile.
3. Speak clearly and enthusiastically.
4. Tell the person exactly what you like.

Skill 13 Accepting compliments

1. Look at the person.
2. Use a pleasant voice.
3. Say, "Thank you."
4. Don't look away, mumble, or deny the compliment.
5. Do not disagree with the compliment.

Skill 14 Volunteering

1. Look at the person.
2. Use a pleasant, enthusiastic voice.
3. Ask if you can help. Describe the activity or task you are offering to do.
4. Thank the person.
5. Check back when you have finished.

Skill 15 Reporting other youth's behavior

1. Look at the teacher or adult.
2. Use a calm voice. Ask to talk to him or her privately.
3. Describe the inappropriate behavior you are reporting.
4. Explain why you are making the report.
5. Answer any questions the adult has.
6. Thank the adult for listening.

Skill 16 Introducing yourself

1. Look at the person. Smile.
2. Use a pleasant voice.
3. Offer a greeting. Say, "Hi, my name is..."
4. Shake the person's hand.
5. When you leave, say, "It was nice to meet you."

Credits: Dowd, T., Tobias, L., Connelly, T., Criste, A., & Nelson, C. (1993). Specialized classroom management. Boystown, NE: The Boys Town Press.

SUMMARY

Gainesville Independent School system chose the Boys Town Social Skills program because it provides all the essential elements that many of our students are lacking. The information provided to students allows them to make decisions based on knowledge, where prior to the program, their decisions were often based on emotion and inexperience. This program also provides children and teens with adults who care and who are willing to make an investment in their lives. The investment alone may be worth far more than the skills taught.